

# LSCA: Investing in America's Future

by Brian O'Neill, Special Issues Editor

Welcome to a special issue of *Indiana Libraries*. In 1956, the United States Congress passed an historic piece of legislation, the Library Services Act, which became in 1964 the Library Services and Construction Act. LSCA is still with us in 1994, a program which has evolved to meet the changing needs of the America people. It has built libraries where there were none, brought the light of learning into the lives of the blind and handicapped, created regional and state-wide library networks for the purpose of sharing resources, and brought the power of the new technology into the lives of everyone by making libraries part of the information superhighway.

Access to timely information must remain available to everyone regardless of their wealth or place of residence. In a service economy, the competition among individuals for jobs and among communities for employers will turn on the ability to access data and organize it into useful information. Libraries will level the playing field in this competition and *provide everyone an equal opportunity*. That was the purpose of LSCA when it began, and as we move deeper into the "information age" LSCA will continue to play a vital role in providing a public infrastructure for travel on the new superhighway. This collection of articles is meant to educate the general public about this little known but extremely successful program.

Before we go on, however, let's take a moment to remember that libraries are in fact a form of infrastructure as vital to the general welfare as roads or power plants. Simply put, infrastructure comprises the foundation for the maintenance and growth of human communities. Public libraries are part of that foundation. Those of us who use libraries know how much they enhance the quality of our personal lives. A great deal of space in this publication will be dedicated to demonstrating the impact libraries have in the lives of real people, the famous and not-so-famous. For many of us, the quest for personal knowledge begins and ends at the public library. The opportunity for personal growth afforded by

discovering what the best minds have said in philosophy, history, art, or religion is priceless.

Moreover, libraries make commercial and civic life possible. Even those who do not use libraries, benefit from them. Professionals of every stripe must read, conduct research, and use the library; those who depend on their services benefit from the maintenance of libraries though they may never walk in one. Small business is especially dependent on accurate, timely, and cost effective information. Small business development has become the backbone of economic development in most regions. As you will discover in these

pages, public libraries have a vital role to play in helping the business community, and again you will hear the word infrastructure.

In 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote the following in a

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letter to the annual conference of the American Library Association: "The libraries of America are and must ever remain the home of free, inquiring minds. To them, our citizens—of all ages, races, of all creeds and political persuasions—must ever be able to turn with clear confidence that there they can freely seek the whole truth, unwarped by fashion and uncompromised by expediency." As a soldier and political leader, Eisenhower knew that public access to untainted information was the cornerstone of a free society, socially, economically, and politically. LSCA was initiated during his presidency and has been continued through every congress and administration since then for a good reason. It's not because of political contributions or special interest groups. It's simply because LSCA has served the American people well, and the citizens of Indiana are no exception.

We begin this special issue of *Indiana Libraries* with a Brief History of LSCA and then focus on three related areas: Networking, Libraries in Business, and Future Directions. Each article will describe another link in the chain of services forged by LSCA -- from constructing single libraries, to building networks between them, to reaching out into communities to

*"By the time I reached the seventh grade, I was heavily absorbed in biographies of people in many callings: political, military, educational, and scientific leadership. I lived their lives through wonderful biographies and shared their experiences through these extraordinarily helpful books. I have no doubt that the lessons of those lives, made possible through a wonderful neighborhood library staffed by librarians who took almost a parental relationship in my education, made a remarkable difference in my life."*

**Richard G. Lugar, U.S. Senator**

include special audiences and the business community, to linking these new alliances in a global network of the future.

In Networking, you will discover the work that has been going on to improve the delivery of information and knowledge to everyone regardless of where they live – in a farm community or the inner city. Sara Laughlin discusses how the Area Library Service Authorities (ALSAs) began and what their purpose is. These regional library networks have made every library, the small as well as the large, stronger by providing the framework for sharing resources. Barbara Markuson describes the role that the Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority has played in bringing the technological revolution into Indiana's Libraries. Thanks to INCOLSA, Indiana is truly on the cutting edge of computer-based cataloging. As more and more libraries join the "web" of other libraries plugged into common databases, the power of library users to find the information they need is multiplied thousands of times. Networking makes finding and sharing information possible, and LSCA makes the networks possible.

Libraries in Business is about the effect of this new informational power. LSCA brought us the libraries and the networks: now the power is there to be used. Some communities have initiated programs to do just that. Emily Mobley in "Libraries and Productivity" discusses the role libraries should be playing in a service and information-driven business environment. Jeffrey Krull in "A Three-Phase Business Connection: Library Services For The Workplace And Beyond" explains how the Allen County Public Library has created a full time position for a business consultant on their staff. Krull provides us with a detailed road map of how libraries may become a proactive partner in economic development activity. Both Mobley and Krull are working within another revolution which has also been building for quite some time. Dick Hays, Deputy assistant Secretary in the office of Libraries and Learning Technologies,

delivered the keynote address in 1981 at the Twentieth Anniversary Celebration of LSCA in Indiana. In his address, Hays noted "Libraries could not merely continue as passive depositories of materials." This is the assumption under which Krull and Mobley are operating. As technology has been increasing informational power, libraries have also been fundamentally rethinking their method of operation.

The movement toward a more proactive role in community affairs in conjunction with the creation of an information superhighway suggests the future of LSCA. In our last section, Future Directions, we review some of

the planning which has taken place both nationally and in Indiana. The new library is not waiting for you to walk in the door. It's going to knock on yours. To a certain extent, that knock will be literally true as libraries take a more market oriented approach to serving their "customers." The new

library will be surveying what the customer wants and not prescribing what they should have. They will be looking for faster, cheaper, and more effective ways of delivering services. Technology of course will play a major part. In, "LSCA to LSTA," Ray Ewick argues that Federal leadership is required if we are to lay down a national information infrastructure to meet future needs and that such an infrastructure cannot be exclusively available to the wealthy. A new Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) will continue to insure that every American has the opportunity to secure the most up-to-date and accurate information possible.

LSCA has served the American people well. We have titled this special issue, LSCA: Investing In Americas Future, because that is exactly what LSCA has been doing since 1956. Those public investments are paying dividends today for ourselves, our children, and our communities, but we must continue reinvesting to insure future returns. Take the time to read the articles that follow. Listen to the voices of the lives that libraries have changed. No program could be serving the General Welfare more effectively.



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